Ltd. have reached a staggering proportions of Rs. 3,500 Crore;

(b) if so, the details thereof, Metropolis/major city-wise, for DOT and MTNL separately, for the last five years, year-wise and their negative impact on net revenues;

(c) the details of the steps taken/ proposed to deal with the phenomena; and

(d) the names of top ten defaulters of MTNL and DOT?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) to (d) The information has been called for and the same will be laid on the Table of the House**.**

Licence Fee by Cellular Operators

541. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that faced with the prospect of paying a licence fee of Rs. 6,000 per subscriber annually, all the eight metro cellular operators have refused to pay licence fees to the Department of Telecommunications (DOT);

(b) if so, what are the names of such companies, licence area, number of subscribers, project cost and total dues towards the DOT from each one as on date and the steps being taken to return the same;

(c) whether any "Arbitration in the offing" as reported in the Hindustan Times dated 24th October, 1998 as per Clause 16 of the Metro Licence Agreement signed between the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) and. DOT; and

(d) if so, reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) The licence fee for the 4th year onwards has been fixed as Rs. 6,023

lakhs per hundred subscribers or part thereof per annum subject to the minimum prescribed in the Licence Agreement. All the operators have made part payment towards the first quarter of 4th year licence fee and have represented individually and through the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) for reduction in the licence fee for 4th year.

(b) Details are given in statement (see below) except project costs which are not being maintained by the Department. All operators have been asked to make payment as per agreement.

(c) and (d) No agreement exists between the COAI and DOT. Since Licence Fee demanded is well within the agreed conditions of the Licence Agreement signed by the individual licensee with the DOT, there in no case for arbitration.

Statement

Operatorwise position is as under:-

Name of licensee	Agra	Amount outstanding on 15.11.98 (Rs. in Crs.)	No. of subscribers as on 30.9.98
M/s Modi	Calcutta	3.80	19105

Name of licensee	Agra	Amount outstanding on 15.11.98 as (Rs. in Crs.)	No. of subscribers on 30.9.98
M/s Usha	Calcutta	0.54	24678
M/s Bharati	Delhi	12.87	99002
M/s Sterling	Delhi	9.78	95622
M/s BPL	Mumbai	13.22	87505
M/s H. Max	Mumbai	14.50	97262
M/s RPG	Chennai	1.76	15869
M/s Skycell	Chennai	1.84	18299
	TOTAL	58.31	457342

Khagaria Telephone Exchange

542, SHRI JAGDAMBI MANDAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a new building having the telephone capacity for about 5000 lines has been built up by Government at Khagaria (Bihar);

(b) if so, when this building was completed and the amount involved;

(c) whether it is also a fact that no staff has been provided for shifting the telecom office from old premises to the new building so far;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(e) by when the same is likely to be made functional and more telephone released in the area?

THE MINSITER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) The building alongwith environmental works is likely to be completed by December, 1998. Total expenditure involved is estimated to be Rs. 65,00,000'-.

(c) No Sir, In fact, staff is available for shifting the Telecom Office from the old premises to the new Building. However**,** the shift will take place after the installation of Telecom equipment is taken in hand.

(d) Not applicable.

(e) The Telecom equipment will be made functional by March 1999 and Telephone connections released thereafter.

Shortage of Telecom Staff in NER

543. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether understaffing is an important cause of poor performance of the telecom sector in the North-Eastern Region (NER);

(b) if so, category-wise, shortage of manpower and steps taken to man the department with optimum strength; and

(c) the compelling reasons to run the department understaffed and measures initiated to overcome the situation by special recruitment drive or otherwise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) No, understaffing is not the cause. However, service is affected in some of the pockets due to difficult terrain and other related problems.